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ABSTRACT

Education should help students with their intellectual as well as emotional growth. The counseling center at Harvard University, called the Bureau of Study Counsel, assumes that students' dilemmas are not simply academic. Generally, there are three kinds of services at the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel: didactic-cognitive techniques; group interventions; and individual counseling or psychotherapy. In general, the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel may be characterized by three distinctive features: a dual emphasis on students' mental as well as intellectual well-being, a clinical/developmental perspective to understanding of students' problems, and a wide variety of services to students. Although these principles can provide a model for Chinese college counselors to organize their counseling services, there are significant social and cultural differences between America and China which would make it difficult for the Harvard model to be directly transplanted to Chinese universities. To help with such a process, Chinese counselors must first develop extensive outreach programs to educate students about the relationship between one's mental well-being and his intellectual functioning. Next, the Chinese counselor should respect the individuality of the student, and attempt to establish a genuine relationship with the student. The Chinese counselor should organize groups and workshops on issues of common concerns to students, and should set up short training programs for well-qualified counselors. Finally, a regular supervision system should be instituted. (LLL)

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Suggestions for Organization of Student Counseling Services in China by Applying the Harvard Model

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I. Introduction

Education should help students with their intellectual as well as emotional growth. Moreover, "academic difficulties are sensitive indicators of students' general psychological well-being, and can not be abstracted from the context of their level of development, adaptive style, psychodynamic conflicts, social functioning, family expectations, and situational demands" (Ducey, 1989). Therefore, educational institutions at any level should be prepared to confront students' academic under-achievement with psychological understanding and therapeutic assistance. Such is reflected in many educational systems in the world, Europe and North America in particular, where well established student counseling services are provided in most of their educational institutions. These counseling services are based in principles of clinical, developmental, and educational psychology and play an important role in the emotional well-being of their students. In China, however, such psychological counseling services are just beginning to appear on college campuses and badly need professional assistance from all sources. In order to help these counseling centers develop, this paper presents a brief introduction to the organization of student counseling services at Harvard University. This is followed by a set of five suggestions about the structuring of counseling services in Chinese universities.

II. An Introduction to the Bureau of Study Counsel at Harvard University

A. General assumptions

Formally, the counseling center at Harvard University is called the Bureau of Study Counsel. It was established in 1946 and serves as a clinical-developmental center for counseling of students' emotional and academic problems. It assumes that students' dilemmas are not simply academic ones in isolation, but also involve a need to reorganize a sense of self (Ducey, 1989). Thus conceived, it seeks to respond to students' maturational needs with respect, empathy and clinical sensitivity. In addition, it also assumes that students' academic adjustment, psychological adaptation, and social functioning are closely interwoven and developmentally based. Therefore, it advocates an integrated approach to treatment of students' problems and tries to address both external and internal issues that interfere with students' social and intellectual functioning. In short, it attempts to help students fully develop their intellectual and emotional potential during the time they study at Harvard University.

B. Assessment Principles

Assessment is the first step in a counseling process. It is crucial to the establishment of a trustworthy relationship between the counselor and the student. Five general principles have been used at the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel.

The first principle is that of empathetic listening, by which a counselor is required to communicate with a student with sympathy, understanding, and clinical sensitivity. Use of this principle would enable the student feel relaxed, hopeful, and self-conscious of his problems in and out of a counseling session.

The second principle is that of responsive communication, which

requires a counselor to respond to the student's presentation of personal problems with thoughtful interpretations about the relationship between his overt dilemmas and covert motives. In so doing, the student will hopefully gain insights about his problems and take initiatives in overcoming them on his own.

The third principle is to respect the student's defenses, which seeks to preserve in the student a certain self-experience and self-image and to test for their utility in conflict resolution and flexibility (Ducey, 1989). As a result, the student will feel less threatened of his efforts to change himself.

The fourth principle is to strike a balance between the counselor's subjective empathy and his objective evaluation. This requires that the counselor remain unbiased and non-judgmental to student's problems and not to identify himself with them readily.

The fifth principle is to make treatment decisions by means of matching students' complex needs with appropriate interventions available.

C. Forms of services

Generally, there are three kinds of services at the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel: 1) Didactic-cognitive techniques; 2) group interventions; and 3) individual counseling or psychotherapy. This classification "suggests a sequence from cognitive restructuring to emotional experiencing, from remediation of 'deficit' to resolution of 'conflict', from present focusing to past and future telescoping into the present, and from the publicly crafted persona to the uncomfortably private self (Ducey, 1989)".

Didactic-cognitive techniques are useful for students whose academic problem-solving skills can be improved through support of cognitive maturation. They prove to be highly effective with students who are used to learning through instruction and thus demonstrate specific learning deficits. Accordingly, didactic approaches either address learning problems directly or provide cognitive perspectives on the learning process (Ducey, 1989).

For instance, for students who demonstrate reading deficiency, which is a very common problem among freshmen, the Bureau offers a reading strategy course about efficient learning of information from reading. Specifically, students meet for one hour per day for 14 days, learning how to read fast and well by practicing a range of skills. Another example, for students who have difficulties in learning a particular course, the Bureau organizes peer tutoring which helps these students master the subject matter of a course and improve their methods of learning. Finally, for students who fearfully assume some teaching responsibilities, the Bureau holds seminars on the aspects of teaching/learning process which help people reflect on their pedagogical assumptions and explore different ways of lecturing and classroom management.

Group interventions, on the other hand, offer effective treatment of academic problems that are developmentally grounded and need widely applicable prescriptions. Moreover, the group dynamics can provide reassurance, morale building, and mutual reinforcement for its members as well (Ducey, 1989). The group interventions at the Bureau takes three forms: groups, workshops, and structured courses.

Groups are usually constituted on a time-limited (six to eight meetings per semester) basis and focus on issues that are of common concern to students. For instance, one very well-attended group session at the Bureau is the procrastination group. Students, with assistance of a counselor, talk freely about their experiences of procrastination, their frustrations with it, their feelings about it, and above all, their strategies to cope with it. In so doing, students would share their wisdom and determination in overcoming the problem and gain peer support in the process of achieving the goal. Another interesting group is the teaching and intimacy film and discussion series. For the group, the bureau presents two or three films in a semester, with each being followed by a faculty-student panel that conducts a discussion with the audience about issues of power and intimacy in teacher/student relationships. Other groups address such common campus issues as eating concerns, human relating, sexual harassment, cultural transitions, anger control, assertiveness training, problem-solving in math and science, etc.

Workshops offer training on specific academic issues, such as assessment of individual learning strategies, time management, writing research papers, and making best use of reading period, etc. For example, the Bureau offers to students a self-assessment exercise at the time of registration. The exercise enables students to learn about how they learn best, based on their performance on three tasks: 1) a learning topology, in which students' responses to multiple-choice questions about common learning situations reveal their characteristic learning styles (escape-oriented, dutiful,

purposeful, anticipatory, or 'voiceful' approach to learning from Perry's scheme); 2) open-ended questions about past learning experiences; and 3) an experience of grading academic essays of differential quality, which gives them an opportunity to assess the kind of analytical thinking expected of them at college.

Sometimes exercises are given and graded to let students see that work done with intentionality sticks better than knowledge gained with a passive and receptive attitude. They attempt to transit students from being dutifully submissive to being actively acknowledging of their own perspectives in learning (Ducey, 1989).

Structured courses teach students learning and study skills. They are helpful for those students who are unprepared for various challenging demands at college. Furthermore, a group didactic approach generates a mutually supportive atmosphere in learning without being concerned with grading (Ducey, 1989). An example of such courses is that of the Harvard reading strategy course. An implicit objective of the course is to help students develop an active, goal-oriented approach to learning rather than a passive, unreflective one.

Finally, Individual counseling and psychotherapy is the most extensively used approach to resolving students' academic and emotional problems. It offers students a chance to discuss various intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal problems that they confront in their social and academic functioning, such as maladjustment to Harvard university, choice of a concentration or a career, difficulties with roommates or teachers, difficulties in family/marital relationship, etc. Conversations with a counselor help

a student clarify his or her thinking on the issues. Psychotherapy, on the other hand, engages in collaborative exploration of internal conflicts or emotional issues that may compromise one's sense of personal integration, motivation and self-confidence, or even creative utilization of one's full talents. This approach pays more attention to students' intrapsychic world of imaginary and the symbolic than to the actual external pressures and demands on them. Inso far as a student's current academic or personal problems may originate from his preoccupations with or unresolved feelings about some past experiences, psychotherapy tries to help a student be aware of them so that he can regain control of his life.

In conclusion, the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel provides to students a wide variety of appropriate counseling services that attempt to directly or indirectly address their academic or emotional difficulties with genuine empathy and sensitivity. A taxonomy of the counseling services at Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel is given below:

Academic	Psychological	Consultative
- Harvard Course in Reading Strategies	- Study Counseling - Counseling	- Supervision - Advising
- Peer Tutoring	- Psychotherapy	- House/Yard affiliations
- Seminars on teaching/learning process	- Groups on university experience	- General consultation
- Study Strategy Materials	- film show	- Presentations - Publications

D. Features of the Harvard model of counseling

In general, the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel may be characterized by three distinctive features: a dual emphasis on students' mental as well as intellectual well-being, a clinical/developmental perspective to understanding of students' problems, and a wide variety of services to students.

Unlike most other counseling centers in the country, which tend to focus on students' psychological conflicts only, the Bureau attempts to deal with students' learning problems apart from their emotional ones. By accommodating a didactic-cognitive model, the Bureau provides greater academic services to students and are in closer contact with their learning difficulties as well. Moreover, students would also feel less stigmatized for coming to the Bureau. In fact, this is part of the reason why the Bureau keeps its name[1] even though its work has become primarily psychological in nature.

Additionally, the Bureau also tries to help students understand their academic or other kinds of problems within the contexts of their present self functioning. In so doing, it endorses not only a psychodynamic approach to such understanding, but a constructive-developmental perspective as well. As such, students' problems are not viewed as pathological in nature, but rather as as developmental immaturity or inbalances. Thus conceived, the Bureau provides both therapeutic counseling and

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[1]The Bureau of Study Counsel was established in 1946 by merging three separate student advisory organizations at the time: the Bureau of Supervisors, the Committee on Use of English, and the Remedial Reading Course. Its original goals were to help students with their learning problems and disabilities.

didactic training to students. The joint perspective enables counselors at the Bureau to look at students' problems with more open-mindedness.

Finally, the Bureau offers to students a wide array of services through different formats. Taken together, they try to address students' specific learning or psychological problems with clinical sensitivity. The insights gained are often intuitively interesting and useful to students as well.

In summary, what constitutes the Harvard model of student counseling is a diversity in its theoretical orientations and a variety in service offerings. In other words, it takes an eclectic approach to serving students' needs.

III. Suggestions for organization of student counseling services in China

In the preceding paragraphs, the theoretical assumptions, assessment principles, treatment varieties, and distinctive features of the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel are briefly discussed. It is hoped that the discussion can provide a model for Chinese college counselors to organize their counseling services. However, it is important to realize that, given the significant social and cultural differences between America and China, the Harvard model or, in a broader sense, the American model, can not be directly transplanted to Chinese universities. It needs to be modified to fit the social and educational reality in Chinese society. In order to help with such a process, I would like to propose, in the rest of the paper, a set of four

suggestions as to how student counseling services may be developed in China.

1. To increase students' awareness of psychological well-being in addition to that of their intellectual growth

American society is highly developed in terms of its use of counseling services. Because of this, American students are accustomed to seeking counseling/therapeutic assistance from early on in their schooling careers. Moreover, they are not ashamed of seeing counselors, nor are they afraid of confiding their morbid thoughts to therapists. Chinese students, on the contrary, are not used to solving their academic or personal problems through psychological interventions. This is partly due to a severe lack of counseling services in China and partly due to a cultural bias against disclosing one's private matters to strangers. Chinese students are thus much less prepared than American students to seek counseling when there is a need for it.

Seen in this light, it is suggested that Chinese college counselors develop extensive out-reach programs to educate students about the relationship between one's mental well-being and his intellectual functioning. For instance, students should know that college education poses many unprecedented challenges in their lives and that to successfully meet these challenges, they need to have better skills of self-control, self-determination and self/other relating. Students lacking these skills will find it difficult to adjust to college and may even suffer from such mental disorders as depression, dysthymia, and even schizophrenia. Additionally, students should be aware that their academic under-achievements are often a

result of their insufficient study skills that are based on less developed modalities of learning. Failure to adjust their learning skills would undermine their ability to work independently, which is essential to college education. Finally, students should understand that to seek counseling is to gain an understanding of their problems in the context of their present social and intellectual functioning. They must realize that the process of counseling may invariably promotes one's cognitive and emotional maturity.

In short, students should be prepared to confront various challenges at college and not be afraid of talking with a counselor about their difficulties in dealing with such a process.

2. To establish a genuine therapeutic relationship between a counselor and a student

Establishment of a genuine counselor/counselee relationship is essential to successful counseling experience. At the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel, this is achieved by applying the above mentioned five principles that, taken together, attempt to cultivate mutual trust and respect between the counselor and the student from very beginning.

In China, however, such empathetic connection is not easily fostered between the counselor and the student. There are both cultural and social barriers to it. Culturally speaking, the teacher-student relationship in Chinese society has been traditionally characterized by authoritarianism, which makes it difficult for a counselor to talk with a student on an equal footing. As a result, the counselor may find it quite uncomfortable to let the student take the

lead in talking and to respond to this with respect and approval. The counselor may find it even more uncomfortable to offer no advice and judgements while listening to the student. By the same token, it may be equally difficult for a student to assume an active role in a session and be encouraged to solve his problems on his own rather than being told what to do.

Socially speaking, Chinese higher education incorporates a political instruction system. The people who do political instructions and teaching usually show little respect toward students. They typically expect students to simply follow their instructions and not openly challenge them. Consequently, there has been a communicative gap between these people and students.

Given these barriers, it is suggested that Chinese college counselors define their roles in distinction to those of teachers and political instructors. Furthermore, they should learn to talk with students with respect and sensitivity. Specifically, they should be respectful of whatever students have to say and understand them in the context of their present social and intellectual functioning. They should learn to be non-judgmental to students' problems and be prepared to not to explicitly instruct students about what to do. They should also value students' frames of references and be strictly concerned with the issue of confidentiality. Finally, they should explain to the student the goals of counseling from the beginning and constantly evaluate on them as well. Correspondingly, students should also be aware that a counselor should not take a stance on their current problems. Instead, the counselor's role is to help them

clarify their doubts, confusions, and anxious thoughts through the process of his problem-solving, so that they can cope with them more spontaneously and with more self-sufficiency.

In brief, it is only by respecting the individuality of a student that a genuine relationship may be effectively established.

3. To organize groups and workshops on issues of common concerns to students

As discussed above, the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel offers to students a wide variety of group sessions and workshops. These sessions address various academic or interpersonal issues that students commonly share at school, and have proved to be very effective in adjusting students to the new environment.

For Chinese counselors, organization of similar groups and workshops are highly recommended as well. They should help students, particularly first-year and second-year students, develop better study habits and problem-solving skills. For instance, workshops may be organized to help students learn to take lecture notes, to read fast and well, and to write good research papers, etc. In addition, seminars and group sessions may be organized to help students cope with test anxiety, take tests with strategies, get over depression after having performed poorly in tests, etc. Peer tutoring may also be organized for students who are willing to donate their time, energy and wisdom to helping their fellow students face up to their challenges in life. Seminars and film shows may also be used for group discussions.

It is hoped that activities such as these would enable students

to become not only more mature in their intellectual functioning, but also more conscious of the importance of mental well-being and their need for counseling.

4. To set up short training programs for well-qualified counselors

In the U.S., it takes years of training and supervision to become a qualified counselor/therapist. Such is manifested at Bureau of Study Counsel in that all of its counselors hold either a master's degree or a doctorate in clinical, counseling, or developmental psychology. Of course, it is impossible to expect that Chinese college counselors possess the same credentials. But it is important that people who do college counseling do get some training before they start to work. Therefore, it is suggested that short, intensive counselor education programs be set up wherever it is possible to do so. The programs should offer courses in theories of counseling/psychotherapy, personality assessment, interview skills and the ethics of counseling. In addition, seminars, workshops or conferences on specific topics of counseling and psychotherapy ought to be organized frequently. They should enable counselors to exchange information and personal experiences as well. By the same token, it is advisable that workshops for student peer counseling be organized, which would train students to talk with their peers with empathy and clinical sensitivity.

Finally, it is recommended that the programs accommodate college administrators. It is important for them to understand that students' academic problems reflect diverse motives, conflicts, and deficits in their inner worlds. Also important to know is that the resolution of students' problems involves more than academic advising or additional

schoolwork, but a good knowledge of their present social and intellectual functioning and of their preoccupations with past experiences. Above all, administrators should be respectful of students' individuality and be appreciative of their efforts at self-actualization.

5. To institutionalize a regular supervision system

Supervision is important to training of professional counselors. At the Bureau, intern counselors receive two hours of supervision each week during which they consult with a licensed therapist about their therapeutic work with students. Typically, they would go over a taped episode of their counseling work and do role-play about various therapeutic interactions. In addition, they attend a weekly intern seminar on common issues of counseling/psychotherapy and engage in subsequent discussions. For matters of psychiatric nature, they also attend, together with other staff members at the Bureau, a bi-weekly meeting with a psychiatrist from the mental health department of the university clinic. They would get information concerning the student's medical records and make necessary referrals should the student's situation deteriorates.

Given these exercises, it is suggested that Chinese college counselors institutionalize a similar system of supervision through the coordination of medical professionals in university clinics. If, due to lack of professional training or medical facilities, such supervision system is difficult to be established immediately, it would be desirable that some mutual supervision among college counselors be institutionlized on a regular basis. During these

meetings, it is important that the counselors exchange information about their work and reach consensus about what to do on problems that students commonly present. Equally important is that the counselors have immediate consultation about students' problems that may be psychiatric in nature and do not delay their treatments. Above all, they should keep records of their work and be strictly concerned with the issue of confidentiality as well. Hopefully, these practices will enable the counselors learn from their experiences and become increasingly more skilled in their work.

IV. Summary

Student counseling is an integral part of modern educational administration. It is essential to students' emotional well-being and facilitates their intellectual growth as well. Student counseling services are just beginning to develop in China and need to draw experiences from countries where the services are better organized and provided. The paper describes the Harvard Bureau of Study Counsel as a model of effective student counseling. What is distinctive about the model is that it offers to students therapeutic counseling, academic advising and didactic training through a variety of forms. Chinese college counselors ought to incorporate these features into their work and develop models of counseling which are socially and culturally appropriate to Chinese students.

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